

**APPLYING TRANSLUCENT FILTERS ACCORDING TO VISUAL DISABILITY NEEDS  
IN A NETWORK ENVIRONMENT**

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**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

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The present application is related to the following  
copending application, which is filed on even date herewith and  
incorporated herein by reference:

(1) U.S. Patent Application Serial No. \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ (Attorney  
Docket No. AUS920010535US1).

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**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

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**1. Technical Field:**

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The present invention relates in general to computer systems  
with graphical user interfaces and, in particular, to applying  
tinted transparent filters to graphical images. Still more  
particularly, the present invention relates to applying an  
adjustable transparent filter to a graphical user interface  
according to visual disability needs.

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**2. Description of the Related Art:**

Computer technology is continuously expanding, resulting in  
modern computer systems which provide increased performance. In  
particular, as computer technology expands, technologies that aid

those with visual disabilities also continue to expand. Common visual disabilities include, but are not limited to, color blindness and dyslexia. One example of an aid for those with visual disabilities is a color transparency that increases visibility when physically laid over a display monitor.

A limitation of current physical color filters is that the color and opacity of the physical color filter cannot be varied to meet individual visibility needs. In particular, the brightness of images on a display monitor may vary depending on a computer application executing a video or other graphic being displayed, or even the type of display monitor used. Such variation limits the benefit of a physical color filter that does not adjust to the variations. In addition, different hues of color filters are needed for different visual disabilities, such that a different color filter is needed to be physically laid over a display monitor for each type of visual disability. For example, a red and green color filter may benefit one with color blindness while a rose hued color filter may benefit one with dyslexia.

Another limitation of current physical color filters is that not every display monitor utilized by an individual with a visual disability will include a physical color filter. For example, an individual may look at a television, a computer screen, an automatic teller machine display (ATM) and other display monitors during the day. Attaching a color filter to each of these multiple types of display monitors of multiple sizes is cumbersome to individuals.

Color filters provide a color hue that is translucent, such that the displayed image is visible through the color filter.

Displaying windows with translucency in a graphical user interface is described in U.S. Patent 5,892,511 where multiple windows are open and the top-level windows are displayed as translucent such that the user may view windows positioned below. However, merely displaying top-level windows as translucent does not aid a user with visual disabilities in viewing all information displayed on a monitor.

Therefore, in view of the foregoing, there is a need for a method, system and program for allowing users to selectively apply a color transparent window where the user may adjust the opacity and hue of the color transparent window applied over a display image in order to achieve optimum visibility for that user.

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5 In view of the foregoing, it is therefore an object of the present invention to provide an improved method, system and program for an improved graphical user interface.

10 It is another object of the present invention to provide a method, system and program for applying tinted transparent filters to graphical images.

15 It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a method, system and program for applying an adjustable transparent filter to a graphical user interface according to visual disability needs.

20 According to one aspect of the present invention, an image is received at a receiver communicatively connected via a network to an image server and connected to a display device for output of the image. A translucent style is specified for a particular user at the receiver. A translucent filter overlay is applied over the image according to the translucent style for output to the display device, such that the image output to the display device is adjusted to specifically accommodate for a visual disability of the particular user. The translucent filter overlay may be applied to the total image area for the display device or to selected areas, depending on the type of data displayed within those selected areas.

30 The translucent style may be received as input from a remote server system communicatively connected to the receiver via the network. In addition, the translucent style may be received as

input from a personal storage device detectable by the receiver. Further, the translucent style may be received as input selected according to a type of visual disability and may be specified for a particular user by a visual specialist.

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According to another advantage of the present invention, the translucent style may be specified in a cascading style sheet (CSS) or may be converted into a CSS for determining the translucent filter overlay. In addition, the actual style of the image may be adjusted by the CSS.

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All objects, features, and advantages of the present invention will become apparent in the following detailed written description.

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## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The novel features believed characteristic of the invention are set forth in the appended claims. The invention itself  
5 however, as well as a preferred mode of use, further objects and advantages thereof, will best be understood by reference to the following detailed description of an illustrative embodiment when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

10 **Figure 1** depicts one embodiment of a computer system with which the method, system and program of the present invention may advantageously be utilized;

15 **Figure 2** illustrates a simplified block diagram of a client/server environment in which the transfer of images typically takes place in accordance with the method, system and program of the present invention;

20 **Figure 3** depicts a block diagram of a client system in accordance with the method, system, and program of the present invention;

25 **Figure 4** illustrates a table of entries within a transparency style database in accordance with the method, system, and program of the present invention;

30 **Figure 5** depicts an illustrative example of a transparent overlay in accordance with the method, system, and program of the present invention; and

**Figure 6** illustrates a high level logic flowchart of a process and program for applying a transparent overlay in accordance with the method, system, and program of the present invention.

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**DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT**

A method, system, and program for applying translucent filters according to visual disability needs is provided. A translucent filter is a window displayed to be visible yet also show any windows on top of it and behind it. Advantageously, in the present invention, translucent filters may extend to the edges of a display monitor such that the application of the filter is not detectable. In addition, translucent filters may be selectively applied to portions of a display monitor, such as where any text is displayed.

This translucent effect may be further enhanced in any of a wide variety of conventional manners, such as by changing the color of the translucent filter, changing the intensity of the color of the translucent filter, and other adjustments to the opacity and hue of the translucent filter. In particular, a user may have a translucency profile that is detected by multiple diverse display monitors viewed by the user, where the translucency profile may be utilized to specify the color, opacity, and size of the translucent filter applied to multiple diverse display monitors.

Additionally, it is to be appreciated that although translucent filters are discussed herein, the present invention may use any other method which serves to visibly filter graphical displays to accommodate visual disabilities. For example, a user may select for any text to be output in a font size of at least 20 point type, to accommodate for a visual disability.

In the following description, for the purposes of explanation, numerous specific details are set forth in order to



provide a thorough understanding of the present invention. It will be apparent, however, to one skilled in the art that the present invention may be practiced without these specific details. In other instances, well-known structures and devices are shown in block diagram form in order to avoid unnecessarily obscuring the present invention.

#### HARDWARE OVERVIEW

The present invention may be executed in a variety of systems, including a variety of computing systems and electronic devices under a number of different operating systems. In one embodiment of the present invention, the computing system is a portable computing system such as a notebook computer, a palmtop computer, a personal digital assistant, a telephone or other electronic computing system that may also incorporate communications features that provide for telephony, enhanced telephony, messaging and information services. However, the computing system may also be, for example, a desktop computer, a network computer, a midrange computer, a server system or a mainframe computer. Therefore, in general, the present invention is preferably executed in a computer system that performs computing tasks such as manipulating data in storage that is accessible to the computer system. In addition, the computer system preferably includes at least one output device and at least one input device.

Referring now to the drawings and in particular to **Figure 1**, there is depicted one embodiment of a computer system with which the method, system and program of the present invention may advantageously be utilized. Computer system **10** comprises a bus **22** or other communication device for communicating information

within computer system **10**, and at least one processing device such as processor **12**, coupled to bus **22** for processing information. Bus **22** preferably includes low-latency and high-latency paths that are connected by bridges and controlled within computer system **10** by multiple bus controllers.

Processor **12** may be a general-purpose processor such as IBM's PowerPC™ processor that, during normal operation, processes data under the control of operating system and application software stored in a dynamic storage device such as random access memory (RAM) **14** and a static storage device such as Read Only Memory (ROM) **16**. The operating system preferably provides a graphical user interface (GUI) to the user. In a preferred embodiment, application software contains machine executable instructions that when executed on processor **12** carry out the operations depicted in the flowchart of **FIG. 6** and others described herein. Alternatively, the steps of the present invention might be performed by specific hardware components that contain hardwire logic for performing the steps, or by any combination of programmed computer components and custom hardware components.

The present invention may be provided as a computer program product, included on a machine-readable medium having stored thereon the machine executable instructions used to program computer system **10** to perform a process according to the present invention. The term "machine-readable medium" as used herein includes any medium that participates in providing instructions to processor **12** or other components of computer system **10** for execution. Such a medium may take many forms including, but not limited to, non-volatile media, volatile media, and transmission

media. Common forms of non-volatile media include, for example, a floppy disk, a flexible disk, a hard disk, magnetic tape or any other magnetic medium, a compact disc ROM (CD-ROM), a digital video disc-ROM (DVD-ROM) or any other optical medium, punch cards  
5 or any other physical medium with patterns of holes, a programmable ROM (PROM), an erasable PROM (EPROM), electrically EPROM (EEPROM), a flash memory, any other memory chip or cartridge, or any other medium from which computer system 10 can read and which is suitable for storing instructions. In the  
10 present embodiment, an example of non-volatile media is storage device 18. Volatile media includes dynamic memory such as RAM 14. Transmission media includes coaxial cables, copper wire or fiber optics, including the wires that comprise bus 22. Transmission media can also take the form of acoustic or light  
15 waves, such as those generated during radio wave or infrared data communications.

Moreover, the present invention may be downloaded as a computer program product, wherein the program instructions may be  
20 transferred from a remote computer such as a server 39 to requesting computer system 10 by way of data signals embodied in a carrier wave or other propagation medium via a network link 34 (e.g., a modem or network connection) to a communications  
25 interface 32 coupled to bus 22. Communications interface 32 provides a two-way data communications coupling to network link 34 that may be connected, for example, to a local area network (LAN), wide area network (WAN), or as depicted herein, directly to an Internet Service Provider (ISP) 37. In particular, network  
30 link 34 may provide wired and/or wireless network communications to one or more networks.

ISP **37** in turn provides data communication services through the Internet **38** or other network. Internet **38** may refer to the worldwide collection of networks and gateways that use a particular protocol, such as Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) and Internet Protocol (IP), to communicate with one another. ISP **37** and Internet **38** both use electrical, electromagnetic, or optical signals that carry digital or analog data streams. The signals through the various networks and the signals on network link **34** and through communication interface **32**, which carry the digital or analog data to and from computer system **10**, are exemplary forms of carrier waves transporting the information.

Further, multiple peripheral components may be added to computer system **10**. For example, an audio output **28** is attached to bus **22** for controlling audio output through a speaker or other audio projection device. A display **24** is also attached to bus **22** for providing visual, tactile or other graphical representation formats. Display **24** may include both non-transparent surfaces, such as monitors, and transparent surfaces, such as headset sunglasses or vehicle windshield displays.

A keyboard **26** and cursor control device **30**, such as a mouse, trackball, or cursor direction keys, are coupled to bus **22** as interfaces for user inputs to computer system **10**. In alternate embodiments of the present invention, additional input and output peripheral components may be added.

#### NETWORK CONTEXT

With reference now to **Figure 2**, there is depicted a simplified block diagram of a client/server environment in which

the transfer of images typically takes place in accordance with the method, system and program of the present invention. The client/server environment is implemented within multiple network architectures. For example, the architecture of the World Wide Web (the Web) follows a traditional client/server modeled environment.

The terms "client" and "server" are used to refer to a computer's general role as a requester of data (the client) or provider of data (the server). In the Web environment, web browsers such as Netscape Navigator typically reside on client systems **40a-40n** and render Web documents (pages) served by at least one server such as image server **42**. Additionally, each of client systems **40a-40n** and image server **42** may function as both a "client" and a "server" and may be implemented utilizing a computer system such as computer system **10** of **Figure 1**.

The Web may refer to the total set of interlinked hypertext documents residing on servers all around the world. A network **44**, such as the Internet, provides an infrastructure for transmitting these hypertext documents between client systems **40a-40n** and image server **42**. Documents (pages) on the Web may be written in multiple languages, such as Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) or Extensible Markup Language (XML), and identified by Uniform Resource Indicators (URIs) that specify the particular image server **42** and pathname by which a file can be accessed, and then transmitted from image server **42** to an end user utilizing a protocol such as Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP). Web pages may further include text, graphic images, movie files, and sounds as well as Java applets and other small embedded software programs that execute when the user activates them by clicking on a link.

Advantageously, in the present invention, image server **42** transfers a stream of data that is displayable as images, video, text, and other data to client systems **40a-40n**. In addition to transmitting web pages, in particular, image server **42** may function as a digital television (DTV) transmitter, a satellite television transmitter, or other types of broadcasting transmitters. Further, image server **42** may function as a data transmitter for information to be displayed at an automatic teller machine (ATM), a display for travel information (e.g. bus terminal schedules), and other display areas that are generally available to the public.

According to one advantage of the present invention, multiple client systems **40a-40n** may receive a particular stream of data for an image, however the output of the image may be specified at each of client systems **40a-40n** to accommodate for multiple types of disabilities. Alternatively, each of client systems **40a-40n** may receive an image that is specified according to viewer by image server **42**.

Streams of data received at each of client systems **40a-40n** are converted into an output format for display at input/output (I/O) devices **41a-41n**. I/O devices **41a-41n** may include multiple types of output interfaces including, but not limited to, display monitors, high definition enabled televisions, audio outputs, portable display devices, and other output interfaces that may be limited to output, however advantageously allow for both input and output.

Referring now to **Figure 3**, there is illustrated a block diagram of a client system in accordance with the method, system, and program of the present invention. In the embodiment, client system **40** includes a receiver **50** for receiving a stream of data including information for an output image.

Advantageously, receiver **50** converts the output image into a format for display via I/O device **41**. Receiver **50** may also apply a transparent overlay image to the original output image prior to output to I/O device **41**. In particular, receiver **50** may utilize an operating system or browser software for applying the transparent overlay image to the original output image. In addition, in particular, an SVG output format may be utilized for implementing the display of images with transparent overlays via I/O device **41**.

In particular, client system **40** may access a data storage system **52** including a translucent style database **54** that indicates preferred color filters to be applied to graphical outputs. In particular, color filters may be applied in order to aid viewers with visual disabilities.

The style preferences within translucent style database **54** may be stored in multiple data formats. Preferably, a user may define a style preference including hue, tint, and transparency. In addition, a user may select from multiple pre-defined styles that are generically defined for multiple types of visual disabilities.

One data format that is particularly advantageous for storage of style preferences in the present invention is a

cascading style sheet (CSS). Cascading style sheets are typically utilized to control the appearance of web-based documents. For example, "H1 {color: gray; background: white;}" defines a heading to be colored gray with a white background.

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An advantage of cascading style sheets is that the appearance of a heading "H1" can be defined once, but apply across multiple pages. In addition, a rule for an alternate heading "H1" may be defined for a single page, where the alternate heading "H1" will override the general heading "H1".

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The appearance of pages may be defined by the author of the pages according to CSSs. In addition, viewers may create reader CSSs that will cascade with the author styles as well as the styles utilized by the browser or other application interfacing the web pages. For example, a color-blind reader could create a style for headings "H1 {color: white; background: black;}" to make headings stand out.

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According to one advantage of the present invention, a user may define the tint, hue, and level of transparency of a overlay to be applied to particular types of images, where the style is translated into a reader CSS. According to another embodiment of the present invention, the CSS received with the output image may include multiple pre-defined styles, where the reader CSS indicates which of those pre-defined styles to be applied according to visual disability.

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In particular, client system **40** may store multiple sets of translucent styles, such that each viewer may select from a set of translucent styles stored for that viewer. In addition, client system **40** may receive translucent style preferences for



storage within translucent style database **54** from inputs including, but not limited to, a keyed entry, a voiced entry, a personal storage device (e.g. a smartcard), a remote server system, and other inputs. According to one advantage of the present invention, a remote server system may store translucent style preferences for multiple users, where a user may request the translucent style preference to be transferred to a current receiver by entering a personal identification or other indicator.

With reference now to **Figure 4**, there is depicted a table of entries within a transparency style database in accordance with the method, system, and program of the present invention. As illustrated, a table **70** includes translucent style preferences for multiple users.

In the example, users may be specified according to individual users, such as individual users "A" and "C". In addition, in the example, users may be specified according to a particular type of visual disability, such as "color blind" users.

In addition, in the example, the type of graphic output is specified. Multiple types of graphic output are distinguishable in a single output stream. For example, a web page may include video output and text output, where each of the types of graphics are distinguished.

Further, the style to be applied to a transparent overlay is specified for each user. The style may be indicated by a particular color label that represents a pre-determined output of hue and tint, such as rose or red/green overlay #1.

Alternatively, a style may be specialized to a particular style and tint. Further, a level of transparency may be defined.

According to one advantage of the present invention, a visual specialist may specify a style to be applied to a transparent overlay in order to enhance visual correction for a particular viewer. Such a style may be further specified according to the hue and tint of the different types of graphical output.

Referring now to **Figure 5**, there is illustrated an illustrative example of a transparent overlay in accordance with the method, system, and program of the present invention. As illustrated, an original image **60** is depicted along a z-axis **64** within a display area. Original image **60** may include graphics, video, text, and other displayable objects.

According to one advantage of the present invention, a transparent overlay **62** is applied to original image **60** along z-axis **64**, wherein original image **60** is visible through transparent overlay **62**. In particular, transparent overlay **62** may overlap all of original image **60** or may only overlap portions of original image **60**. In addition, in particular, transparent overlay **62** may be defined by a particular tint, hue and level of transparency.

With reference now to **Figure 6**, there is depicted a high level logic flowchart of a process and program for applying a transparent overlay in accordance with the method, system, and program of the present invention. As illustrated, the process starts at block **90** and thereafter passes to block **92**.

Block **92** depicts a determination as to whether or not a transparency overlay style selection is received. If a transparency overlay style selection is not received, then the process iterates at block **92**. If a transparency overlay style selection is received, then the process passes to block **94**.

Block **94** illustrates adjusting an overlay style according to the overlay style selection received. In particular, the overlay style may include a CSS or other type of style file for controlling the appearance of a transparency overlay output. Next, block **96** depicts applying the transparency overlay over the portions of the current output image affected by the transparency overlay style selection. Thereafter, block **98** illustrates outputting the overlaid graphical image to an output interface, and the process ends.

While the invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to a preferred embodiment, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes in form and detail may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.